

STRONGER
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 WEAKER

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AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP 30TH

While Idaho’s state teacher unions have limited resources from their members, they see relatively high spending on education—and teachers—in the state. Only 62.2 percent of teachers in the Gem State are union members, the 35th-highest rate of 51 jurisdictions (and about equal to the average unionization rate in states where bargaining is similarly permitted but not required). Union revenue is also low: Idaho’s NEA and AFT state-level affiliates see \$444 annually per teacher in the state (29th). But the state directs 26.1 percent of its expenditures toward K-12 education—only four other states spend a higher proportion. Although state money, combined with

federal and local, amounts to not much per pupil (\$8,840; 45th), 55.9 percent of those dollars go toward teacher salaries and benefits (13th).

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS² TIED FOR 4TH

Idaho’s teacher unions have been a significant presence in the state politics over the past decade. Their contributions comprised 1.4 percent of total donations received by candidates for state office (11th) and 11.7 percent of candidate donations from the ten highest-giving sectors in the state (also 11th). Moreover, teacher unions contributed 3.1 percent of the donations received by state political parties (6th). The unions’ involvement extended beyond financial, with 23.1 percent of all Idaho delegates to the

Democratic and Republican national conventions identifying as teacher union members (very few states had more).³

AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 42ND

Idaho is one of fourteen states that permits, but does not require, collective bargaining, and the scope of that bargaining is limited. At the time that we calculated our data, Idaho prohibited three of the twenty-one items we examined from being included in collective bargaining: tenure, teacher transfer/reassignment, and layoffs. Should districts choose to negotiate with their employees, they must bargain wages, insurance benefits, fringe benefits, and leave. State law did not address the remaining fourteen items on our list, leaving them to the discretion of districts. (Note, though, that the recently-passed SB 1108 limits the scope of collective bargaining further: Only cost-of-living adjustments to wages and benefits are now allowable bargaining topics, although voters may overturn the law later in 2012—see sidebar. The law was passed after we calculated our metric, and thus, its provisions were not included in our analyses.) Further, Idaho does not permit teacher strikes.

AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 45TH

Teacher policies in Idaho are among the least-aligned with traditional union interests of any state. For instance, Idaho requires that student achievement data be the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations and bans seniority from consideration in layoff decisions. Recent legislation eliminated tenure for new teachers, who instead will work on annual contracts. Further, with 3.5 percent of all teachers laid off annually due to poor

performance, its dismissal rate is the 7th-highest in the country. Finally, the state does not require charter schools to participate in district collective bargaining agreements.

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE TIED FOR 42ND

When compared to other states, stakeholder responses indicate that Idaho's teacher unions are relatively weak. While they note that Democrats *a/ways* need teacher union support to be elected, consistent with the high levels of giving discussed in Area 2, they report that the unions are weak in nearly every other respect. Survey respondents rank their influence on education policy below that of the state school board, state association of school administrators, and state school boards association. They also report that teacher unions are not effective in protecting dollars for education, that the positions of state education leaders rarely align with those of teacher unions, and that policies proposed the governor and enacted in the latest legislative session were *not at all* in line with teacher union priorities.⁴

OVERALL 36TH

While Idaho's teacher unions are relatively significant donors and party-convention-goers—and have rendered their endorsement crucial to Democratic political candidates—they operate within an unfavorable policy environment and have not garnered much of a reputation for changing that environment.

WATCH YOUR STEP

A 2010 Republican sweep of the Idaho legislature and governor's office gave reformers (and opponents of collective bargaining in education) a major opportunity for action—one which they immediately exploited. In early 2011, lawmakers passed a bill that gutted teacher bargaining rights and completely changed state employment and evaluation policies. Under SB 1108, all existing contracts are void and the scope of bargaining is now limited to wages and benefits, and if a district and its union cannot agree on the terms of compensation, district leaders are allowed to impose them. Evaluations, transfers, and workload (among many other things) are now off the table and completely in the hands of state and district leaders.^{5,6} The bill also eliminates tenure for new teachers, placing them on annual contracts (which districts can extend to two years at their discretion), and removes seniority as a factor in layoff decisions. A companion bill, SB 1110, established merit pay.⁷ Republican Sen. John Goedde emphasized that SB 1108 “isn't about collective bargaining; it's about putting students first.”⁸ But Democrat Rep. Brian Cronin (a former public school teacher) countered, “Let's stop pretending that SB 1108 has anything to do with [student achievement]. The bill intends to dismantle the Idaho Education Association, put teachers in their place, and make sure that teachers are effectively silenced.”⁹

Despite the pushback from the capitol, teachers and the IEA are doing their best to make sure that they are heard, organizing teacher protests and student walkouts across the state.¹⁰ The Idaho Education Association filed a lawsuit against the state, Governor C.L. Otter, and State Superintendent Tom Luna, alleging that they “overstepped their legal bounds” by enacting a law that is unconstitutional on a number of fronts; the court initially rejected the suit, and the union is currently appealing the decision.¹¹ But the IEA has another opportunity to overturn both SB 1108 and SB 1110: It collected enough signatures to place veto referendums on the 2012 ballot (and tried, but failed, to put a recall of Luna before the voters as well).¹² In June 2012, meanwhile, twenty-one school districts took advantage of SB 1108. They unilaterally decided on provisions relative to teacher wages and benefits when negotiations with local unions reached an impasse.¹³ An overstep or the right step? Voters will decide in November.

IDAHO RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 36TH			
Area and Rank ^a	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status ^b
AREA 1: RESOURCES & MEMBERSHIP 30	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	35th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/or AFT affiliate(s)?	29th
	Spending on education	By rank, what percentage of state expenditures (of state general funds, state restricted funds, state bonds, and federal "pass-through" funds) is directed to K-12 education?	5th
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	45th
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	13th
AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS 4*	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	11th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	6th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	11th
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	6th*
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING^c 42	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Permitted
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	32nd
	Automatic revenue streams	What is the unions' legal right to automatically collect agency fees from non-members and/or collect member dues via automatic payroll deductions?	Agency fees prohibited
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Prohibited
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 45	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	Available to all teachers
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	25th
	Evaluations	What is the maximum potential consequence for veteran teachers who receive unsatisfactory evaluation(s)?	Teacher improvement plan
		Is classroom effectiveness included in teacher evaluations? If so, how is it weighted?	Required; Preponderant criterion
	Terms of employment	How long before a teacher earns tenure?	Annual contracts only
		Is student/teacher performance considered in tenure decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not included
		Is seniority considered in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not considered
		Is teacher performance included in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not required
		By rank, what percentage of the teaching workforce was dismissed due to poor performance?	45th
Class size	Is class size restricted for grades 1-3? If so, is the restriction higher or lower than the national average (20)?	No restriction	

Area and Rank	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 45 (cont.)	Charter school structural limitations ^c	Is there a cap (limit) placed on the number of charter schools that can operate in the state (or other jurisdiction) and/or on the number of students who can attend charter schools?	State cap with limited room for growth
		Does the state allow a variety of charter schools: start-ups, conversions, and virtual schools?	Yes
		How many charter authorizing options exist? How active are those authorizers?	Two or more w/ limited jurisdiction
	Charter school exemptions ^c	Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state laws and state/district regulations (except those that safeguard students and fiscal accountability)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Partially; Some automatic exemptions for all schools
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state teacher-certification requirements? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	No; Schools can apply for exemptions
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Yes

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE^d 42*	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Fourth- or fifth-most influential
	Influence over campaigns	On a scale from always to never, how often do Democratic candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Often/Always
		On a scale from always to never, how often do Republican candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Rarely
	Influence over spending	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that even in times of cutbacks, teacher unions are effective in protecting dollars for education?	Disagree
		Given recent budgetary constraints, would you say that teacher unions generally make concessions to prevent reductions in pay and benefits or fight hard to prevent those reductions?	Generally fight
	Influence over policy	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that teacher unions ward off proposals in your state with which they disagree?	Neutral
		On a scale from always to never, how often do existing state education policies reflect teacher-union priorities?	Sometimes
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were state education policies proposed by the governor during your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Not at all/Mostly not in line
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were legislative outcomes of your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Not at all/Mostly not in line
	Influence over key stakeholders	On a scale from always to never, how often have the priorities of state education leaders aligned with teacher-union positions in the past three years?	Rarely/Sometimes
		Would you say that teacher unions typically compromise with policymakers to ensure that their preferred policies are enacted, or typically need not make concessions?	Generally compromise

* Tied with another state

^a Area ranks are calculated using a weighted average of sub-indicators. For a more detailed description, see Appendix A.

^b Where possible, we report a state's rank as compared to other states on a given metric. For example, out of 51 states, Idaho has the 35th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: Idaho permits collective bargaining, and union agency fees are prohibited. For a more detailed description of our metrics and methodology, see Appendix A. To request the raw data for your state, send an email to uniondata@edexcellence.net.

^c See note in Area 3, above, and sidebar.

^d For all survey questions, stakeholders were asked specifically about teacher unions, candidates, policies, and leaders in their state. In addition, we asked about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

ENDNOTES

¹ A state's overall rank is calculated as follows: First, we score it on multiple sub-indicators (sub-indicator data and scores for Idaho are shown in the table, *Idaho Rankings by Area and Indicator*). Second, we take a weighted average of the sub-indicators in each of five areas. In each area, we use that average to place the states in rank order. For example, in Area 1: Resources and Membership, Idaho is ranked 30th of 51 based on the weighted average of its sub-indicators. To generate the state's overall rank, we average the five area ranks together, then re-order the states. For a more detailed description of data sources and methodology, see Appendix A.

² Readers should note that these figures include only direct donations from unions and union-connected PACs, but not their spending on electioneering/advertising, mobilizing the union's own membership, lobbying, or advocacy. A recent *Wall Street Journal* report found that donations and lobbying activities account for a small share of union political spending compared with their expenditures on member mobilization and advocacy. Even the AFT agreed, making the argument that since its mission is organizing and activism, it will naturally spend significant amounts on these activities. Thus, the percentages we report here are extremely conservative representations of what unions actually spend on politics. For more information, see Appendix A, Area 2; Tom McGinty and Brody Mullins, "Political Spending by Unions Far Exceeds Direct Donations," *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2012; and Jeff Hauser, "Wall Street Journal Compares Union Political Spending to Corporate Donations," AFL-CIO, July 10, 2012.

³ At the time of publication, the 2000 conventions were the most recent for which such detailed data were available in forms that met rigorous standards. However, 2008 data provided by the Democratic National Convention were highly correlated with the reliable figures from 2000.

⁴ We asked stakeholders about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

⁵ Laura Zuckerman, "By A 20-15 Vote, The Idaho Senate On Thursday Approved Legislation That Curtails Collective Bargaining By Public School Teachers," *Reuters*, February 24, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/24/us-idaho-teachers-idUSTRE71N7A220110224>.

⁶ "Idaho Educators Challenge Constitutionality Of SB 1108," Idaho Education Association, April 27, 2011, <http://idahoea.org/news/iea-challenges-constitutionality-of-senate-bill-1108>.

⁷ Betsy Z. Russell, "Bill Limits Teachers' Bargaining Powers," *Spokesman-Review*, March 9, 2011, <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2011/mar/09/bill-limits-teachers-bargaining-powers/>.

⁸ Zuckerman.

⁹ Russell.

¹⁰ KTVB and Associated Press, "Proposed Education Reforms Prompt Strong Reaction From Students," KTVB.com, February 28, 2011, <http://www.ktvb.com/news/Students-walk-out-of-class-in-protest-of-education-reform-plan-117064878.html>.

¹¹ Idaho Education Association.

¹² Sean Cavanagh, "Idaho Schools Superintendent Won't Face Recall," *Education Week*, June 28, 2011, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2011/06/idaho_school_superintendent_wont_face_recall.html.

¹³ Betsy Z. Russell, "21 Idaho Districts Unilaterally Set Contracts For Teachers," *Spokesman-Review*, June 21, 2012, <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2012/jun/21/21-idaho-districts-unilaterally-set-contracts-for/>.